

A Bedtime Story For Holly by Kamiye Celeek

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Family, Hurt-Comfort

Language: English

Characters: Eleven/Jane H., Mike W.

Pairings: Mike W./Eleven/Jane H.

Status: Completed

Published: 2019-01-30 23:06:32

Updated: 2019-01-30 23:06:32

Packaged: 2019-12-12 20:10:28

Rating: K

Chapters: 2

Words: 5,478

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Karen has Mike put Holly to bed one night and the youngest Wheeler demands her older brother make up a story for her. He ends up telling her a story that seems very familiar... and he finds a little hope in the process.

1. The Princess and the Paladin

"Are you down there?"

Mike looked up from his walkie-talkie to see his mother coming down the stairs. Quickly, he stashed it away and gave her an expectant look.

"What's up, Mom?"

"I need you to put Holly to bed for me. There's a meeting I'm going to that I can't skip."

Mike wanted to say no. He wanted to stay in the basement where he was and keep trying to call El. But he couldn't say no. Holly was the only family member he had that he *liked* most of the time. And he was more than willing to spend the evening with her if it meant taking his mind off the fact that the love of his life was gone.

"Sure. I'll be up there in a minute."

"She's already had her bath. Bedtime is eight o'clock. Have a good night, sweetheart. Oh, and don't fall asleep in your blanket fort again, okay?"

"Okay." Mike nodded and his mother was gone.

He headed upstairs and found Holly playing with her toys. Checking his watch, he discovered it was seven-thirty—more than early enough to start putting his four-year-old sister to bed. Besides, whenever he put her to bed, she'd demand a story. And he'd need plenty of time to tell a story if he ended up telling her one.

"Holly, it's almost bedtime," he told her. "You wanna go ahead and get into bed?"

"Story," she replied.

"You want a story from me?"

"Mm-hmm!"

"Why?"

"Because you tell the best stories!"

"All right, but you have to clean up your toys and get into bed."

Excited at the prospect of hearing one of his stories, Holly had all her toys cleaned up in record time. She climbed into bed and waited for him to come over.

"What story do you want tonight?" He reached for her bookshelf and she shook her head. "You don't want a story?"

"Make one up."

Make up a story?

"About what?"

"A princess. And a dragon."

Okay. Simple enough. He closed his eyes for a second and tried to think of a princess.

Of course his mind immediately went to *his* princess. The story of him and his princess and the dragon that had all but taken her away from him. And he had the perfect story to tell Holly... even if it didn't have a happy ending like most stories did. At least, not *yet*. But it would, one day, when she came back to him and they lived out the rest of their lives in peace.

"Mikey, start!" she demanded.

"Somebody's awfully bossy." Holly pouted and he sighed. "Okay, ready?"

"Ready!"

"Once upon a time, there was a Wicked King. He had a kingdom that was as ruthless and cruel as he was, and they liked it that way. It was far away from any other place, so nobody paid much attention to it. But inside the castle, there was one good person—the King's

stepdaughter, a beautiful Princess who also happened to be a very powerful Mage. The King wanted her to use her powers to do bad things and become evil like him. He didn't realize that the Princess was planning to escape and be a good person forever. And she did escape, out into the night, when a Dragon attacked the kingdom of evil."

He noticed Holly was hanging onto every word.

"That same night, a brave Cleric was taken by the Dragon, too. Everyone in the kingdom where he lived was worried about him, especially his three best friends. One was a Bard, another was a Ranger, and the last one was a Paladin. They wanted to be the ones to slay the Dragon and find their friend because they were heroes. So one night, they snuck out of the kingdom and into the woods near where the Dragon had taken the Cleric. It was cold and raining, but they were determined to find him."

"What about the Princess, Mikey?"

"Well, that was it. They found the Princess instead of their friend. The Paladin wanted to take her home and help her get out of the rain, but the Ranger and the Bard said that it wasn't a good idea. They brought her to the Paladin's home anyway, and she slept in his cellar. She liked it more than her cell at the castle of evil, anyway. The Paladin watched her get comfortable and asked what her name was. She didn't know, but that didn't matter to him. He wanted her to feel safe."

"Did he think she was pretty?"

"He didn't. He thought she was the most beautiful girl he'd ever seen in his life."

"Keep going."

"The Princess knew what had happened to the Cleric, but she couldn't talk very well. You see, the Wicked King hadn't taught her how, and speaking to people was a new experience. But she tried to show them where the Dragon had taken the Cleric. In a strange way, he was at home—but in a place they couldn't see, a hidden realm. The Dragon

had taken him there and the Princess knew how to get there. She could even find things there without going through the portal known as the Gate."

"Did something bad happen?"

"Not yet. They had to try and hear the Cleric through a special stone that only a powerful Mage could use. That stone was at the local adventurer's academy, where the Paladin, Ranger, Bard, and Cleric learned how to be heroes. They made the Princess look even more beautiful so that they could sneak her in and the Paladin loved her even more. Especially when she stopped a nasty troll from hurting the Paladin."

The thought of Troy being a troll felt right.

"But then, when they went to find the Gate that would let them into the hidden realm, they found themselves being led in circles. The Princess was trying to keep them from going near it."

"Why?"

"Because the Gate was in the kingdom of evil, and she didn't want them to go there. And the Dragon was still lurking around, too. She was trying to keep them safe. But the Ranger got mad at her, saying she was a traitor. He and the Paladin started fighting, dueling in a way that scared the Princess. She ended up throwing the Ranger into the air and hurting him on accident. The Paladin was horrified and yelled at the Princess, who ran away."

"I don't like that."

"The Paladin didn't, either. He was sorry as soon as she was gone and he was mad at himself for yelling at her."

"Did he go find her?"

"Not at first. He was too mad at himself to go look for her. Then the Bard told him that he should apologize to the Ranger and go find the Princess. Sadly, the Ranger thought that they should continue their quest without the Princess and went to try and find the Gate by himself. That left the Bard and the Paladin looking for the Princess

without him."

Holly seemed to be *very* interested now.

"While they were searching for her in the forest, the troll she'd stopped came out with a friend of his who was a goblin. They chased the Bard and the Paladin to a cliff overlooking the ocean, and the troll caught the Bard. He told the Paladin to jump into the sea if he wanted the Bard to live. And the Paladin went right to the edge of that cliff and jumped."

"But he didn't find his princess!" wailed Holly.

"You're right. He didn't find her... but she found him. She made him fly and helped him land safely on the ground back at the top. And then she made the troll and the goblin go away. Proudly, the Bard declared that the Princess was his friend before the Princess collapsed. The Paladin rushed to her side and woke her up. Then..." He felt his heart catch in his throat. "She told the Paladin something."

"What did she say?!"

"She told him that she was the one who opened the Gate. And that she was the reason the Cleric had been taken by the dragon. She started crying and he hugged her to make her feel better. Because he knew she wasn't the monster that she thought she was. He took her home and helped clean her up, because she was sad and needed his help. And he almost kissed her, but the Bard interrupted because the Ranger needed their help."

"He found the Gate?"

"He didn't. Instead, he found the kingdom of evil. And he found out that the Wicked King was sending an army after the Princess because the King wanted her back. Thanks to his warning, the Paladin and the Bard were able to take the Princess away before the Wicked King's army arrived. They met the Ranger, but they were being chased by the army still. A chariot raced towards the Paladin as he rode furiously to a hideaway, the Princess behind him on his horse. And the Princess flipped the chariot over the Paladin's head, making sure he was safe."

"She loved him, too?"

"Maybe. Or maybe she did it because she was a good person and wanted to protect her friends. She'd never had friends before."

"Because the Wicked King is a meanie."

"Exactly."

"What's next?"

"Well, they made it to the hideaway, where they were called through a magic stone by a Rogue, a Monk, a Druid, and a Barbarian. They knew about the Princess and they wanted to help, too. In fact, the Monk was the Cleric's mother and the Druid was his brother. The Rogue was the Paladin's sister, and the Barbarian wanted to make sure the Cleric came home safely. They brought the Princess and her friends back to another safe place, where they tried to talk to the Cleric through a magic stone again. But the Princess's power was drained from her earlier efforts."

"No!"

"Luckily, the Bard called a knowledgeable Wizard and learned how to make a special pool that would allow the Princess to extend her powers. They went to the adventurer's academy and made the pool, where they found out the Cleric was alive. The Princess told him to wait, that the Monk was coming to save him, and the Cleric asked them to hurry. The Monk and the Barbarian left to fight their way into the kingdom of evil."

"What about the Princess?"

"She stayed there with the Paladin, resting with him and his friends, before the Paladin realized that the Rogue and the Druid had left, too. They'd gone to fight the Dragon, who'd killed the Rogue's best friend. And so the Bard and the Ranger went to get some supplies to help the Princess get better faster. She was going to be free from her stepfather and stay with her new friends."

"I like that."

"The Paladin, of course, was completely in love with her and just wanted her to be happy. He promised her that she wouldn't have to live in his cellar anymore and that she'd have a real bed. The Rogue would be her sister and his mother would be like her mother. He even invited her to go to the Winter's Ball with him, trying to explain how he felt about her. And then..." The lump in his throat returned as he thought back to those final peaceful moments with El. "He kissed her."

"And they lived happily ever after, right?"

"I wish they could have. But somehow, the Wicked King and his army had found them. They chased the Princess and her friends, and the Princess made some of them disappear, but it was too much for her and she collapsed again. The Wicked King took her in his arms and told her that she would go home with him. She didn't want to go with him, and she cried out for the Paladin. And then the Dragon showed up and attacked the Wicked King and his army. The Bard carried the Princess, trying to help get her to safety, and the Paladin held her hand as they took refuge in a small cottage nearby. He promised her that they would stay together, that he would be with her always."

Holly's eyes were wide.

"The Dragon burst through the door and began to try and attack the three adventurers. The Ranger fired arrows at it, but nothing seemed to be able to stop it. Then it was thrown into the wall. While watching the beast screech, they realized that the Princess was going to slay the Dragon herself. The Paladin rushed forward to stop her, but she used her powers to throw him back so he could be safe. She whispered a final goodbye to him before telling the dragon, '*no more.*' And just like that, she slayed the dragon and made it disappear... and she disappeared, too."

"She's *gone*?" whispered Holly, her eyes wide.

"Yes. But the Barbarian and the Monk managed to save the Cleric, so the Paladin had his best friend back. He was happy about that, but he was still hurting. He'd only known the Princess six days, but she'd made his way into his heart and he knew he was never going to let her go. Not if he lived a hundred years would he ever forget her smile

or her voice."

"Did the Princess die?"

"No. He knew she wasn't dead. She was still alive, but she was in the hidden realm and he didn't know how to find her there. But he used a magic stone to call out to her every night in hopes she might answer."

"And did she?"

"Not yet. But he'll never stop until he knows whether or not she's okay. Because he loves her more than he loves anything else and that's what love does. And when she comes back to him, they'll go to the Winter's Ball and live happily ever after. The end."

He could feel a slight pain in his chest at the ending. He wasn't a particular fan of it, and his hand shook slightly. Then he felt a smaller hand on his and saw Holly reaching out.

"You'll find her again, Mikey," she told him, her eyes smiling. "You'll find your princess and she'll love you forever."

His eyes widened as Holly snuggled under her blankets to go to sleep.

"Night night, Mikey."

"Night, Holly." He kissed his younger sister's forehead and turned off her light before going downstairs to the basement and picking up his Super-Comm.

She knew.

"Hi, El. It's me, Mike. Right now, it's 8:04, Day 323. I just finished putting Holly to bed for my mom. She wanted me to make up a story for her, so I... I told her about you. And she *knew* it was about you, even though I tried to hide it. A-and she said that I'd find you, one day, and that we'd be with each other forever." His heart dropped. "God, I miss you so much... please, tell me you're okay. I just want to know if you're okay. That's all I need, *please*."

There was no answer, but he could... *feel* her. Her presence. As if she were a feather in the wind, a whisper on the breeze. His heart beat a

little faster and he knew the truth. He'd known it since El disappeared at the school. And now Holly knew that truth, too.

The Paladin would find the Princess, no matter how long it took.

Okay, I just wanted to write a Holly-Mike sibling piece. It seems to be fairly accepted in the fandom that Mike would totally tell the best bedtime stories due to his dramatic flair for storytelling—whether that be to his own kids or to Nancy's or to Holly. This was just my take on it. He's not as much of an emo in this story because his little sister is a ray of sunshine that he desperately needs without El.

I see most people asking for Jopper or more Mom-Steve next season, but what I want to see is Mike being a big brother to Holly. Maybe he has to take her along with him when he's supposed to go on a date with El because his mom makes him babysit. And then Holly ends up involved in whatever is going on and El's basically being a mom trying to keep her safe like Steve and Mike just ends up thinking 'I want this girl to have my babies.'

Also, before you jump up my ass about how perceptive Holly is in this, I would like to say this: I am an Early Childhood Education major in college and one of the first things they teach us in those classes is that children observe more than we think. Most kids are much smarter than we give them credit for. I babysit a four-year-old sometimes who is already starting to read aloud on her own.

Anyway... thanks for reading!

So long and thanks for all the fish!

2. Bonus: Reunion

By popular request, I now give you the season 2 version.

"Michael, I need you to put your sister to bed."

Mike looked up from where he was doing his homework to see his mother looking at him. She had her purse on her shoulder and her keys in her hand, meaning she was heading out.

"Another meeting?"

"Yes. I'm going to be out for a while. Please make sure she actually goes to sleep, all right?"

"All right."

The only thing he'd rather be doing this time was cuddling with El back at the cabin, but he was firmly *banned* from the place after seven-thirty. It was a little unfair but he could understand where Hopper was coming from. He wasn't *happy* about it, but he could certainly understand.

Mike headed upstairs and found Holly playing with her toys—just like the last time he'd put her to bed, when he'd tried to pass off his love story as fantasy. He'd quickly realized since then that Holly was far smarter than he gave her credit for most of the time. She seemed to understand his feeling for El better than Nancy or their parents at any rate.

"Holly, Mom said I have to put you to bed again."

"Story!" She moved faster than he would've thought, putting her toys away and scrambling into her bed. Just like last time, he reached for her bookshelf and she shook her head.

"You want me to make one up again?"

"Yes. With the Paladin."

He'd taken to telling Holly edited versions of the Party's D&D campaigns as stories when she asked. It never failed to entertain her and he sometimes wondered if maybe he'd be able to get his sister into the game when she got a little older.

"Okay. Ready?"

She looked at him expectantly.

"It had been almost a year since the Mage-Princess vanished after slaying the Dragon. True to his word, the Paladin called her every single night through the magic stone, hoping to hear her voice. But she didn't answer. He started to get angry at everything because he missed her so much, and he wanted to know if she was safe and happy. That was all he wanted from her. The Paladin started getting into trouble a lot, which made his parents unhappy. His friends were worried about him, but they were also worried about the Cleric, who had yet to fully recover from being in the hidden realm."

"Uh-huh..."

"One day, a new girl came to the kingdom from the far west. She was a Zoomer, and she had a hideous Orc for a brother. The Zoomer caught the attention of the Bard, the Ranger, and the Cleric, but the Paladin didn't like her at all. He felt like his friends were trying to replace the Princess and that they didn't care about how much he missed her. He treated the Zoomer very badly, even though she wanted to be his friend, too. She didn't know about the Dragon, or about the kingdom of evil, or about the Princess that had stolen the Paladin's heart when she went away."

Holly's interest was completely wrapped up in the story now.

"The Cleric was struggling because he kept having visions of the hidden realm. He only told the Paladin, who began to pay more attention to his best friend. The Monk worried about her son, and so did her new boyfriend—a Wizard who loved her very much and cared about her son. The Barbarian cared, too, and he did his best to help them get through everything. The only people who could help the Cleric, it seemed, were the residents of the kingdom of evil. The Wicked King was dead and it was a much better place—devoted to

helping the entire world. And it was there that the Cleric began to see a terrible creature—the Dragon King, who wanted nothing more than to take over the Cleric's home."

"Why?"

"Because the Dragon King made the Wicked King look like a nice person. He wanted to destroy the world the heroes lived in because it was much nicer than his and he was jealous. And he wanted to use the Cleric as his spy. But the Monk refused to let her son become the spy, so she cast a spell on him and made him go to sleep. While he was asleep, the Wizard defended everyone in the castle from a horde of Dragons that wanted to hurt everyone inside. And everyone escaped because he let the Dragons get him."

"What about the Paladin and his other friends? The Ranger and the Bard?"

"Well, the Bard had found a baby Dragon and named him Dart, wanting to keep him as a pet. But he escaped and the Bard asked for the help of a Fighter to catch the Dragon. The Ranger, on the other hand, told the Zoomer the truth about the Princess and the Dragon, even though she didn't believe him, and they went to help the Bard find Dart. The Fighter took it upon himself to save all of them, and they found their way to the former castle of evil. The Paladin was already inside, trying to help the Cleric. And thanks to the timely arrival of the Rogue and the Druid, they were able to leave the castle with everyone but the poor Wizard."

Holly's face fell a bit, but she nodded for him to keep going.

"They were inside the monastery where the Monk lived with the Druid and the Cleric, and they discovered the only way to stop the Dragon King was to close the Gate that the Princess had opened almost a year earlier. But they had no idea how to do it. None of them were powerful enough to close the Gate. And the Dragons were closing in on the monastery. All of them were afraid but ready to defend themselves... and then, the Dragons stopped and the door opened. And do you know who walked through that door?"

"Who?!"

"The Princess." Holly started squealing excitedly and Mike had to try and calm her down. "Story's not over yet."

"Keep going!"

"The Paladin was so happy to see her again, and she was happy to see him again, and they just fell into each other's arms. They didn't care that the room was full of people. He told her how much he'd missed her, how many times he'd called... and she had heard. She'd heard him calling her, but she hadn't answered."

"Didn't she love the Paladin?"

"Yes... but she'd been hidden away."

"By who?"

"The Barbarian. He found her in the woods and brought her to a secret cottage where she could live in hiding. He didn't tell anybody because he wanted to keep her safe and raise her as his daughter. The Wicked King was gone, but many of his men were still around and wanted to find the Princess to turn her evil like her stepfather had wanted. And the Princess was grateful to the Barbarian for giving her a real home, but she was also upset because she wasn't allowed to leave. She hadn't answered the Paladin's calls because the Barbarian wouldn't let her."

"The Paladin must've been really mad when he found that out."

"He was. He... he yelled at the Barbarian for keeping the Princess away and hit him for doing it. But the Barbarian understood why the Paladin was angry, and he didn't fight back. Instead, he let him get his anger out before they rejoined the others, who were trying to figure out how to close the Gate. The Princess insisted that she could close the Gate and end what she started, but the Barbarian and the Paladin didn't want to let her. They had to, though, and a plan was also made to stop the Dragon King from taking the Cleric when the Gate closed."

Holly's eyes were wide and she was completely and totally enveloped in the story.

"While the Druid, the Monk, and the Rogue took the Cleric to expel the Dragon King's influence, the Barbarian and the Princess went to the kingdom of evil to try and get to the Gate. The Fighter was left to make sure the Paladin, the Ranger, the Bard, and the Zoomer were safe in the monastery. Before she left to go to the Gate, the Princess promised the Paladin that she would come back to him and he wouldn't lose her again. The Paladin, however, couldn't help but feel like he was useless once she left. The Princess was going back into the place she hated to save them all and all he could do was sit in the monastery. Then he had an idea."

"What kind of idea?"

"The Dragon King's army had dug a series of tunnels under the kingdom. And the Dragon King used a large central area to control his army. The Paladin's plan was that they would go to the hub and set it on fire to call away the Dragon King's army so the Princess could close the Gate. Of course, the Fighter insisted that it was a terrible plan and that it wasn't safe. Then the Zoomer's Orc brother showed up at the monastery to take the Zoomer away. He didn't want her to be near the adventurers because he thought they were beneath her. When he attacked the Ranger, the Fighter attacked him right back. To save the Fighter, the Zoomer used one of the Monk's spells to make the Orc fall asleep."

Holly was obviously on the edge of her seat, and he noticed Nancy was standing in the doorway of Holly's room. She'd been there for a while, listening to the story because she knew he was a damn good storyteller.

"Together, the Paladin and his friends set the hub on fire and the Dragon King's army came running towards them. At the same time, the Dragon King lost his control of the Cleric and the Princess had reached the Gate. She had to muster more power than she ever had before to close it and save everyone. It was hard, but she thought of what she had to protect—her friends and her newfound family. It gave her the strength to force the Gate shut, but she collapsed. Thankfully, she was still alive and the Barbarian took her back to the monastery so that she could see the Paladin. She'd kept her promise to him and he was happy to see her safe."

"Did the Barbarian hide her again?"

"He did, but he let the Paladin and the others go see her in the secret cottage. He never let the Paladin spend the night, but that was okay because at least the Paladin could see his Princess. But, there was one thing bothering the Paladin. He'd made a promise to the Princess a year before and he hadn't been able to keep it. He'd always kept his promises and he wanted to make up for it, but how could he take the Princess to the Winter's Ball if she was supposed to stay in the cottage? And she didn't think that she could go because she didn't have anything to wear to a ball."

"She had a fairy godmother!"

"She had a Rogue godmother," Mike corrected, smirking at Nancy. She rolled her eyes and sat down on the end of Holly's bed.

"The Rogue knew how much the Princess wanted to go to the ball," the eldest Wheeler continued for Mike. "So she took some of her old dresses and some makeup to the cottage and helped the Princess get ready. She didn't tell the Paladin so it would be a surprise. After all, the Barbarian didn't know anything about how to get ready for a fancy party. It had actually been his idea to ask the Rogue."

"On the night of the ball, the Paladin watched as the Zoomer and the Ranger danced together. He was alone, since a girl had asked the Cleric to dance and the Bard was dancing with the Rogue. Then the Princess walked into the room and the Paladin forgot how to breathe for a minute. She was so beautiful and he didn't know how exactly how to tell her."

"He stared at her with a stupid lovestruck look before blurting out how pretty she was and asking her to dance." Mike glared.

"Neither of them knew how to dance, but they were happy to be back together. And this time, they wouldn't be torn apart—not by Dragons or the Wicked King or anything else. And the Paladin gave his Princess another kiss. That was how they knew they were really, truly in love and they would be together forever. They lived happily ever after. The End."

"Is the Princess your girlfriend, Mikey?" Holly asked. Mike turned pink while Nancy burst out laughing.

"Yes, Holly. The Princess is my girlfriend."

"I wanna meet her."

"You will, one day, but for now she has to stay in the secret cottage. And trust me—she wants to meet you, too."

"She sounds really nice." Mike felt himself smiling. "And like she has low standards."

"Oh, *come on!*" Nancy started laughing again and Holly was giggling, too.

"What's the Princess's real name?"

"Her real name is Jane, but I call her El. It's short for Eleanor, which is her middle name."

"Princess Jane Eleanor... I like it!" Holly snuggled under her blankets as Mike tucked her in and Nancy turned out the light. "Night night, Nancy. Night night, Mikey."

"Good night, Holly," the older Wheeler kids replied in unison.

As soon as they were outside the room, Nancy smacked Mike on the arm.

"Have you been telling Holly all the shit that's happened as bedtime stories?!"

"Not *everything*... she doesn't know about where you and Jonathan were while we were in the lab. And she doesn't know who the Barbarian is."

"She'll figure it out pretty quickly once he lets El go out."

"Yeah, well, that's not for a while."

"Dweeb. Night."

"Night."

And part two is done! I asked a few people on part one if they wanted me to do season two, and the general consensus seems to be yes. I might do a part three once season three gets here in July.

And yeah, I added Nancy for fun. You never really see all three Wheeler kids interacting in stories and I feel like we need more of that, please and thank you very much. It's rare as hell. Somebody get on that besides me, please.

So long and thanks for all the fish!